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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: ALMATY NOTES, AUGUST 4 - AUGUST 15, 2008

¶1. The "Almaty Notes" series is intended to maintain focus on developments in civil society, the media, and the opposition in Kazakhstan's "southern capital" following the move of the Embassy to Astana.

Protest at Nur Otan Office

¶2. On August 1, approximately 100 Almaty residents picketed the Almaty office of the ruling Nur Otan party. Participants in the demonstration included "dolshiki" (i.e., individuals who lost money they gave to construction companies to build homes for them) and those whose residences have been demolished to make way for new construction projects. The rationale behind the protest were the broken promises made by the Nur Otan leadership a year ago, said Aynur Kurmanov, head of a new public organization called Taymas (Tireless). (Note: Activist Kurmanov is also head of the Socialist Resistance Movement. End Note.) According to Kurmanov, during the 2007 parliamentary elections, Nur Otan promised to help Almaty residents, particularly those from the outskirts of the city, resolve property-related problems. "Today we want to know what the party has done and what it plans to do to resolve social conflicts," Kurmanov said.

¶3. The head of Nur Otan's Almaty branch, Tokmukhamed Sadykov, invited the participants into his office, but was not able to answer their questions to their satisfaction. Sadykov referred the protestors to a new public council set up to review property and other disputes. The council includes representatives from the government, Nur Otan, opposition parties, and NGOs.

Masimov Meets With Dolshiki

¶4. On August 2, Prime Minister Masimov met in Almaty with representatives of construction companies as well as with "dolshiki" -- including some of the participants in the August 1 demonstration at Nur Otan's office (see paras 2-3 above). Masimov said he would issue an order for \$10 billion tenge (approximately \$83 million) to be transferred from the state budget directly to construction companies, rather than through the Kazyna Sustainable Development Fund as intermediary, in order to assist the companies in completing unfinished projects. Masimov said that these funds would resolve the housing problems of 2500 dolshiki. He also promised that the government would help dolshiki who were defrauded by construction companies, adding that criminal cases would be opened and that guilty parties would go to prison. Masimov explained that the government had introduced into parliament new legislation on "shared-based" construction, which would stiffen conditions so that in the future, construction companies would not find themselves in the same situation they are in today.

Nazarbayev Visits Wholesale Market

15. President Nazarbayev visited Almaty on August 11, following his trip to Beijing for the Olympics. Among other things, Nazarbayev walked through the Arzan wholesale market, which reportedly has lower prices on food and other goods than other Almaty markets. Nazarbayev gave an order to Almaty mayor Akhmetzhan Yesimov to assist the owners of Arzan in opening up similar stores in other parts of the city. "It would be great if such wholesale markets appeared in all Kazakhstani cities," Nazarbayev remarked.

Kazakh-Uighur Friction in Village

16. Opposition newspaper Svoboda Slova reported that on August 3, activists from Kazakh nationalist organizations traveled to the village of Malybay in Almaty oblast to participate in a memorial ceremony for a village resident, Aydyn Khalykov, who had been killed in an alleged interethnic incident on June 27. Police cordoned off the village while the ceremony was going on. Two suspects have been detained in conjunction with Khalykov's murder, but his relatives maintain that at least five people were involved. Approximately 10 per cent of the residents of Malybay are ethnic Kazakhs and the rest are Uighurs. Khalykov had spoken out on more than one occasion against public signage in the Uighur language -- and reportedly once pulled down a Uighur-language sign. His relatives believe that this may have been the trigger for his murder.

17. Following the memorial ceremony, Kazakh nationalist activists demanded that national-level law enforcement authorities launch an investigation into the murder. They also demanded that the village's Uighur-language signage be replaced. Dos Kushim, leader of the Ult Tagdyry (Nation's Destiny) Kazakh nationalist

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organization suggested that oralman (i.e., ethnic Kazakh immigrants from other countries) be resettled to the village to counter-balance the Uighur population.

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